

C O M M U N I T Y N E W S**They came, they saw, and now they want more: *JASON XI a hit***

JASON XI went flawlessly, bringing lessons of space and science to more than 3,000 students who experienced the broadcasts here from JSC. More than 1 million students observed or participated in the JASON XI adventure from other Primary Interactive Network sites around the country and via the Internet.

JSC has participated in JASON for seven years, but this is the first year the NASA space program has been part of the focus topic for the broadcast adventure. This year's project, entitled "Going to Extremes," focused on the challenges of exploration in deep space as well as in the deep sea. JSC scientists and astronauts narrated more than 50 broadcasts during JASON, highlighting space station mock-ups, crew training in the NBL, and space engineering.

The National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration was also a partner for the event. Additional broadcast crews and argonauts, or student adventurers for the JASON Project, participated via NOAA's Aquarius Underwater Laboratory in Key Largo.

Delicia Slaughter, IMPASS, education outreach coordinator, said this year's project was unusual because the students were watching JASON at JSC, an expedition site.

"They were far more anxious this year," said Slaughter. "The fact that the astronauts and mockups were so close as the students watched them on the screens just added to their excitement. We hope the experience encouraged them to have their parents bring them back to learn more about the space program."

Through this year's JASON Project, we hope to have reached students all over the world with the message that it IS possible to become an astronaut, to not give up on that dream and also that space exploration is made possible not only by astronauts, but also by other types of explorers – the engineers, technicians and the whole team at NASA.

– Dr. Bob Ballard, JASON Project founder



Photo courtesy of the JASON Foundation for Education

NASA Astronaut Yvonne Cagle, left, meets with Argonauts Adrea Robinson and Rachel Owen.

Adding to the excitement for the students was the fact that Dr. Bob Ballard, founder of the JASON Project and the discoverer of the sunken *Titanic*,

was among them as a spectator during one of the broadcasts. That was the first time Ballard, who normally is a full-time on-air host for the live broadcasts, has

ever observed the event.

"Since we were broadcasting from a PIN Site this year I just could not let the opportunity pass me by," said Ballard. "I thoroughly enjoyed seeing the excitement on the faces of the children in the audience and feeling their energy as they clapped and yelled out the answers to our questions. It helped me to really understand what parts of our programs reach students the best and what really excites them about learning."

Tim Armour, executive director for the JASON Foundation, also was on site here at JSC viewing the program.

"The JSC staff in Teague did a fantastic job of immersing the students in the space theme and keeping them involved and excited during the program," said Armour. "Since we were fortunate enough to work on camera with some great folks at NASA who really know how to reach students, I think children walked away thinking, 'Hey, maybe I can do that some day. That job really interests me.'"

Slaughter says success of this year's event can be attributed to the growing JSC team that helps execute the event and by improving on previous year's experiences.

"Our part went so well," said Slaughter. "As far as support and technical conflicts, it went flawlessly. We knew from our 'lessons learned' from 1999 that having NASA as the focus for the JASON XI, we were going to need more help. The support we received from the IMPASS team was phenomenal. Everyone stayed positive. Without their support, we would not have been able to pull it off." ■

JASON production crew aims for 'mission success'

Bringing the JASON Project science adventure to schoolchildren around the world has far-reaching rewards, but producing a two-week live broadcast is a massive feat requiring a large behind-the-scenes effort.

Seattle-based Media Arts, Inc., has coordinated the production for the past five years – traveling from the Florida Keys to Yellowstone, Iceland, Bermuda, Monterey Bay, the Peruvian Amazon and, now, to space. The company oversees other partners in the production, including MCI/WorldCom and EDS, who are responsible for the satellite uplink. Since mid-February, they've made themselves at home here at JSC, bringing in three trailers/trucks, a production crew of almost 50 people and miles of cable.

A mobile production truck behind Bldg. 9, resembling our own Mission Control Center, is where the JASON Project is brought to life. A small team inside the pitch-black truck orchestrates the live video seen each day by thousands of student viewers around the world.

Scott Munro is the "flight director," if you will. He directs the entire operation from his chair, front and center, at the production console. As he monitors the multiple incoming image sources, he simultaneously directs the "on air" hosts during their dialogues with the Argonauts and their fellow program hosts. Sitting next to him, literally his right-hand assistant, is Glenis Levine, the technical director.

Levine, like the majority of the crew members working JASON, is a free-lancer who regularly travels around the

country working a variety of assignments but makes it an annual tradition to work on JASON.

"I do it because I believe in the Project," said Levine, who is on her fourth

selects the video that is actually seen at the JASON viewing sites, sometimes changing the images every few seconds.

The production truck has three rows of consoles in the front section – Munro and

row is Nic Dugger, a Middle Tennessee State University student who for the third consecutive year, has taken time off from school to work on the JASON Project. His role this year is similar to Levine's, except on a smaller scale for sites viewing the program on only one screen or via the Internet.

In a small chamber in the middle section of the truck is the audio console. A vast deck covered by rows of knobs and buttons controls every microphone in use. The last third of the truck houses the Grass Valley Profile™ computer system that replaces traditional tape decks for storing and accessing hundreds of video clips used during the broadcasts. This system not only is much faster than tape, but also allows the operator to randomly access the stored material.

Most of the crew reports that JASON XI has been a relatively smooth production.

"We have Radio Shack here!" said Mike Durbin, MCI WorldCom technical consultant to EDS. "At least we can get parts if there is a problem. We could just as easily be in the middle of nowhere surrounded by Iguanas."

The team is happy to be somewhere a little more civilized (their adventure in the Amazon required sleeping in grass huts and featured rice and beans as the menu staple for the entire month). And they all agree there's nowhere they'd rather be.

"Just like the NASA people we've been working with, our job is a matter of teamwork" said Munro. "And we're all here because we love doing it; we believe in it." ■



NASA JSC Photo JSC2000-01895 by Bill Stafford

Production teams worked hard behind the scenes to bring the JASON Project to life. Shown here are Brian Stratton, left, a student argonaut from Galveston, with former Astronaut Dr. Kathy Sullivan talking live to student audiences all over the world.

JASON tour. "There is no other educational project like this anywhere."

Munro says he wouldn't do this project without her and if you watched for even just a few minutes, you'd see why. Throughout each show, she continuously scans the more than 40 available video 'sources' (everything from live camera feeds, taped video and graphics) and

Levine are up front. Behind them sits Barbara Ferderer, who screens the incoming e-mail questions from the viewing sites, and Carol Mark, who sets up the titles, shot descriptions and other real-time graphics seen on screen. Labels like "Dr. Ellen Baker – NASA Astronaut" are created and called up in the first few seconds Baker is on camera and uplinked almost instantly. In the last